



HR1683

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Rabbi
4 Arnold Jacob Wolf, a nationally prominent Reform rabbi known
5 for championing progressive politics and social justice, on
6 December 23, 2008; and

7 WHEREAS, Arnold Jacob Wolf was born in Chicago on March
8 19th, 1924 and grew up in Lakeview; as a boy he was an actor
9 with the Mutual Radio Network; and

10 WHEREAS, Being a person committed to scholarship, Arnold
11 Wolf earned an associate's degree from the University of
12 Chicago, and he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from
13 the University of Cincinnati in 1945; and

14 WHEREAS, Having been greatly influenced by an uncle and
15 great-uncle, both Reform rabbis, Arnold Wolf received his
16 ordination from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati; he then
17 served as a Navy Chaplain with United States occupation forces
18 in Japan; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1957, Rabbi Wolf became the first full-time
20 rabbi of Congregation Solel; there he expressed a willingness
21 to ask questions and try new things, exposed his congregation

1 to an eclectic collection of guest speakers including Reverend
2 Dr. Martin Luther King and members of the Chicago Seven, and
3 created a ground-breaking congregation; and

4 WHEREAS, Committed to social justice, the rabbi marched in
5 Alabama with civil rights leader John Lewis in 1965; two years
6 later he led a group of congregants to Washington to lobby
7 against the Vietnam War; beginning in the early 1960's, his
8 congregation began conducting an annual weekend of Holocaust
9 remembrance, among the first synagogues in the country to do
10 so; in 1973, Rabbi Wolf helped found Breira, an organization of
11 progressive American Jews that advocated a two-state solution
12 to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and

13 WHEREAS, After leaving Congregation Solel, Rabbi Wolf
14 spent eight years as Jewish chaplain and Hillel director at
15 Yale University; and

16 WHEREAS, Rabbi Wolf served as rabbi at KAM Isaiah Israel
17 Congregation, Chicago's oldest Jewish congregation, from 1980
18 until his retirement in 2000 and served as rabbi emeritus until
19 his death; he brought to the congregation practices then
20 unheard of, now more common, such as letting his congregation
21 write its own prayer book and making decisions previously
22 reserved for the rabbi; and

1 WHEREAS, Always being young at heart, Rabbi Wolf was known
2 for saying, "Life starts at 70;" he had his bar mitzvah at the
3 age of 83, 70 years behind schedule because, "In those days,
4 Reform Jews didn't do it," he said; and

5 WHEREAS, Rabbi Laurence Edwards said of him, "the core
6 teaching of Torah for him had to do with justice, and one
7 sometimes had to speak about that in ways that people didn't
8 care to hear; and

9 WHEREAS, President-elect Barack Obama wrote of him, "My
10 conversations with him were always lively; you knew that if he
11 disagreed with you, he would let you know in no uncertain
12 terms, especially if he thought you were overlooking the moral
13 dimensions of an issue, or rationalizing your own failure to
14 live up to the highest moral principles; but he did it with
15 kindness, and often with a smile or a laugh to let you know
16 that even though you were just plain wrong, and had no idea
17 what you were talking about, he still loved you"; and

18 WHEREAS, The passing of Rabbi Wolf will be deeply felt by
19 his wife, Grace Wolf; his sons Jonathan and Benjamin; his four
20 stepdaughters, Sara Berger, Justine Henning, Sarah-Anne
21 Schumann, and Dara Henning; and his 10 grandchildren;
22 therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
3 mourn, along with his family, friends, and the many people
4 whose lives were touched by him, the passing of Rabbi Arnold
5 Jacob Wolf; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
7 presented to the family of Rabbi Wolf as a symbol of our
8 sincere sympathy.